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LEBANON/U.S.
EMBASSY ATTACK

BROKAW: Responsibility for today's bombing was claimed in the name of the Islamic Jihad. Similar claims have been made many times before by that group. Robert Hager reports tonight that the Islamic Jihad is shrouded in mystery. It may not be one group, but several or even none at all.

HAGER: The Islamic Jihad, the name means Islamic Holy War. May 1982, the French Embassy in Beirut attacked by terrorists; Islamic Jihad telephones to take responsibility. April 1983, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut hit; Islamic Jihad telephones again. October 1983, the U.S. Marine barracks at Beirut airport, January of this year, the assassination of the American University in Beirut. Each time Islamic Jihad claims responsibility. But is there a single Islamic Jihad? Georgetown University Middle East specialist Michael Hudson believes there is. MICHAEL\HUDSON (Middle East specialist, Georgetown University): ...that they might have total active militant membership of a 1,000 or 2,000 people, probably not more.

HAGER: Some say its headquartered in the Bakaa Valley of Lebanon, led by a charismatic young firebrand named Hussein *Mussawe. Others say it draws followers from south Beirut, from the Shiite slums. Many believe that it must get some of its money and orders from Khomeini's Iran. But several well-placed U.S. intelligence sources today questioned whether Islamic Jihad is any of these, saying in reality, it may be many different groups, each choosing after its attack to call itself Islamic Jihad. The Rand Corporation's terrorism expert, Brian Jenkins. BRIAN\JENKINS (terrorism expert, Rand Corp.): We don't really have a group, a group that is either tightly knit or just a bunch of crazies. We have a voice on the telephone.

HAGER: The confusion indicates the U.S. has very little reliable intelligence to work with. Robert Hager, NBC News, Washington.